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R 031116Z APR 98  
 FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0265  
 INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
 AMEMBASSY QUITO  
 AMEMBASSY LIMA  
 AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
 AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
 USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
 CIA WASHDC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 CARACAS 001003

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 SUBJECT: WHATEVER IT TAKES TO WIN: A VENEZUELAN CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK,  
 ISSUE 3 (MARCH 16-30)

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 1.5(D) .

REASON:

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 WELCOME TO OUR CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK  
 -----

1. (U) THIS IS THE THIRD IN A BIWEEKLY SERIES OF REPORTS ON

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON  
 CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)  
 DECLASSIFY AFTER: 3 APR 2013  
 DATE/CASE ID: 15 JUL 2009 200503654

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VENEZUELA'S 1998 ELECTIONS. DIVIDED INTO THREE SECTIONS--CAMPAIGN NEWS TICKER, VIGNETTES, AND HIGH-FLYERS AND BOTTOM-FEEDERS--WE HOPE TO USE THIS NOTEBOOK TO BRING YOU BREAKING NEWS, RUMORS AND INSIDER GOSSIP, AND PROFILES OF THE MANY POLITICAL HANDLERS, CAMPAIGN WORKERS, AND POLITICIANS WHO WILL MAKE THIS ELECTION HAPPEN. THIS NOTEBOOK IS DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT OUR REGULAR POLITICAL REPORTING ON THE ELECTIONS, PROVIDING YOU A GLIMPSE OF THE "OFF CAMERA" POLITICS WHICH WILL NOT APPEAR ELSEWHERE.

-----  
CAMPAIGN NEWS TICKER  
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-- (U) EDUARDO FERNANDEZ PUBLICLY DECLARED THAT HE WOULD NOT LEAVE THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY (COPEI), EVEN IF COPEI DECIDES TO REJECT HIS CANDIDACY AND BACK IRENE SAEZ. FERNANDEZ'S STRONG OPPOSITION TO COPEI SUPPORT FOR IRENE, AND HIS TIRELESS PROMOTION OF HIS OWN FLAGGING CAMPAIGN, HAD SOME WORRIED THAT HE WOULD FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF HIS MENTOR, RAFAEL CALDERA, AND LEAVE THE PARTY. RICARDO ARIAS CALDERON, WELL-KNOWN PANAMANIAN POLITICIAN AND

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PRESIDENT OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAS (ODCA), HAS BEEN URGING FERNANDEZ TO STICK TO HIS PRINCIPLES, AND HIS PARTY, AND DO WHAT HE CAN TO KEEP COPEI TRUE TO ITS CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS.

-- (U) IRENE SAEZ HAS CALLED ON THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL (CNE) TO KEEP VOTER REGISTRATION OPEN UNTIL ALL 3,00,000 NEW VOTERS ARE REGISTERED. SHE COMPLAINED THAT THE SCHEDULED VOTER REGISTRATION PERIOD, WHICH RUNS FROM APRIL 1 TO JUNE 30, IS TOO SHORT.

-- (U) MIRIAM KORNBLITH, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE CNE, SAID MARCH 28 THAT THE THREE-MONTH REGISTRATION PERIOD IS PLENTY OF TIME TO REGISTER AND THAT COST AND LOGISTICS WILL PREVENT THE CNA FROM EXTENDING REGISTRATION BEYOND JUNE 30.

-- (U) IRENE ALSO COMPLAINED LOUDLY ABOUT THE SORRY STATE OF ONIDEX, THE GOVERNMENT IDENTIFICATION OFFICE. ALL REGISTERED VOTERS MUST PRODUCE LAMINATED ID CARDS IN ORDER TO VOTE. HOWEVER, IRENE CLAIMS THAT BROKEN AND DAMAGED EQUIPMENT AND POOR ADMINISTRATION HAS LEFT MILLIONS OF POTENTIAL VOTERS WITHOUT VALID IDS. SHE HAS CALLED ON MINISTER OF INTERIOR JOSE GUILLERMO ANDUEZA TO DECLARE AN "EMERGENCY," THUS PERMITTING THE GOVERNMENT TO HIRE A COMPANY TO FIX THE ID-MAKING EQUIPMENT WITHOUT GOING THROUGH A LENGTHY BIDDING PROCESS. ANDUEZA SO FAR HAS BEEN RELUCTANT, TELLING ALL WHO LISTEN

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THAT ONI-DEX IS DOING WELL. NOT MANY ARE CONVINCED. SEVERAL CONGRESSMEN HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY WILL INITIATE "NO-CONFIDENCE" PROCEEDINGS IN THE CONGRESS IF ANDUEZA DOES NOT MOVE QUICKLY TO RESOLVE THE ID PROBLEM.

-- (U) HUGO CHAVEZ COULD NOT KEEP OUT OF THIS FIGHT, TELLING THE  
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PRESS THAT THE ID PROBLEM IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF "STATE VIOLENCE  
AGAINST THE PEOPLE."

-- (U) OSWALDO ALVAREZ PAZ, FORMER COPEI PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE (1993) AND CURRENT COPEI GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE IN ZULIA STATE, CALLED HUGO CHAVEZ A "TROPICAL SADDAM HUSSEIN" AND A "THIRD-RATE QADHAFI." HE DISMISSED CHAVEZ AS A CANDIDATE, SAYING, "HUGO CHAVEZ WILL LOSE THE ELECTIONS" AND "DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN THIS COUNTRY ARE NOT IN DANGER, AND WILL NOT BE IN DANGER."

-- (U) CNA OPENED A DOCKET AGAINST PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ENRIQUE SALAS ROMER FOR ALLEGED "JUMPING THE GUN" ON HIS CAMPAIGN. BY LAW, PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNING CANNOT BEGIN UNTIL AUGUST 1. BROAD-BASED "PARTY" ADVERTIZING IS PERMITTED, BUT NO MENTION CAN BE MADE OF THE PRESIDENCY. SALAS ROMER RECENTLY RAN AN ADD ON TELEVISION IN WHICH A MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILY IS DISCUSSING POSSIBLE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. AFTER DISCUSSING AND DISMISSING CLAUDIO, IRENE, AND CHAVEZ, THE FAMILY TALKS ABOUT SALAS ROMER, NOTING HIS SUCCESS AS GOVERNOR OF CARABOBO. THE ADD ENDS WITH THE FATHER SAYING, "SALAS ROMER AS PRESIDENT? INTERESTING."

-- (C) FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER ADMIRAL RADAMES MUNOZ LEON ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE PRESIDENCY. MUNOZ, WHO WAS DEFENSE MINISTER FOLLOWING THE 1992 COUP ATTEMPTS, IS BEST KNOWN FOR

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
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AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
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AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC  
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ACCUSING PABLO MEDINA AND THE RADICAL CAUSE PARTY (LCR) OF CACHING WEAPONS IN THE BARRIOS FOLLOWING THE FAILED COUP ATTEMPTS. HE GOT IN A PHYSICAL ALTERCATION WITH MEDINA IN THE CONGRESS AT ONE POINT, A FIGHT WHICH HURT MEDINA AND LCR DURING THE 1993 ELECTIONS. MUNOZ LEON'S CANDIDACY HAS BEEN PUSHED AROUND TOWN BY, AMONG OTHERS, JOSE DAVILA, A FORMER DEPUTY AND CURRENT STAFF DIRECTOR OF THE SENATE'S DEFENSE COMMITTEE. DAVILA IS AN INDEPENDENT, BUT HE HAS CLOSE LINKS TO THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY AND AD SENATOR LEWIS PEREZ. DAVILA TOLD US RECENTLY THAT MUNOZ LEON'S CANDIDACY IS AIMED AT DEFLATING CHAVEZ BY CREATING A "MILITARY AND CONSTITUTIONALIST COUNTERPOINT" TO CHAVEZ.

-- (U) NOW THAT LUIS ALFARO HAS AN APPARENT LOCK ON THE AD PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION, OTHER AD CANDIDATES ARE LOOKING FOR SHELTER. ANTONIO LEDESMA, THE MAYOR OF CARACAS, WILL RUN AGAIN FOR MAYOR. SENATOR LEWIS PEREZ IS THE HEIR APPARENT TO ALFARO AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PARTY, AND HAS TURNED HIS CAMPAIGN TEAM TOWARDS WORKING THE PARTY IN SUPPORT OF THAT GOAL. PEREZ WILL BE CHALLENGED FOR THAT JOB BY GUILLERMO CALL, FORMER GOVERNOR OF MONAGAS AND CURRENT SECRETARY GENERAL OF PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL

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ORGANIZATIONS. CALL OVERSAW A MASSIVE AD STUDY OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS BECOME AN AD BLUEPRINT FOR REGIONAL AND CITY GOVERNMENT (SEE ISSUE 2 OF THE CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK). PEREZ IS THE ODDS ON FAVORITE FOR THE JOB AT THIS POINT.

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VIGNETTES  
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DUSTING OFF CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE PROPOSALS  
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3. (U) THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS, PEDRO PABLO AGUILAR, HAS DUSTED OFF SOME OLD CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PROPOSALS AND REACTIVATED THE BICAMERAL CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM COMMITTEE IN AN EFFORT TO TAKE SOME OF THE WIND OUT OF HUGO CHAVEZ'S SAILS. CHAVEZ HAS PROPOSED THE SCRAPPING OF THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION AND THE CREATION OF A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY TO WRITE A NEW CONSTITUTION AND CREATE "A FIFTH REPUBLIC."

4. (U) SPECIFICALLY, AGUILAR IS PROPOSING THAT CONGRESS REFORM THE CONSTITUTION TO PERMIT THE CALLING OF A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY, ALLOW POPULAR AND BINDING REFERENDA, CREATE A "PRIME MINISTER" POSITION, AND INTRODUCE A SECOND ROUND OF PRESIDENTIAL VOTING. THESE PROPOSALS FOLLOWED AGUILAR'S SPEECH BEFORE THE COMBINED HOUSES OF CONGRESS--IMMEDIATELY AFTER CALDERA'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS--IN WHICH AGUILAR SAID IT IS UP TO CONGRESS TO SHOW THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE THAT THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH IS RESPONSIVE, RESPONSIBLE, AND RELEVANT.

5. (C) MANY OF OUR CONTACTS WERE QUICK TO WHISPER THAT THE REFORM PROPOSALS WERE AIMED MORE AT COPEI THAN THE NATION. AGUILAR IS A KEY MEMBER OF COPEI. THESE CONTACTS ASSERTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER POSITION IS A BONE THROWN TO THOSE IN COPEI STILL OPPOSED TO THE GREEN PARTY'S IMPENDING ALIGNMENT WITH IRENE SAEZ. SUPPOSEDLY, THE PURPOSE IS TO KEEP THE PRESIDENT AS HEAD OF STATE, BUT MAKE THE PRIME MINISTER HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. CYNICALLY PUT, THE IDEA IS TO MOVE THE POPULARLY-ELECTED PRESIDENT--BE IT IRENE OR WHOMEVER--OUT OF THE WAY AND LET A "REAL POLITICIAN" RUN THE

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GOVERNMENT.

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6. (U) AGUILAR'S PROPOSAL CAUGHT MOMENTARY ATTENTION, EVEN GENERATING SOME DEBATE IN THE PRESS, BUT WON ONLY LUKEWARM SUPPORT FROM THE PARTIES. RELUCTANT TO APPEAR OPPOSED TO REFORM, MOST OF THE PARTIES OFFERED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE IDEAS PROPOSED BUT QUESTIONED THE TIMING, SUGGESTING THAT SUCH A BROAD REFORM OF THE CONSTITUTION SHOULD ONLY TAKE PLACE AFTER THE ELECTIONS. THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (AD) STAKED OUT A MORE AGGRESSIVE POSITION. DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL ARISTIDES HOSPEDALES SAID AD WOULD SUPPORT AGUILAR'S REFORM PROPOSALS, BUT ONLY AFTER COEPI AND THE OTHER MAJOR PARTIES HAD AGREED TO THE "NATIONAL ACCORD" WHICH AD HAS PROPOSED.

## VENAMCHAM GETS IN THE POLLING GAME

7. (U) THE VENEZUELAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COMMISSIONED A POLITICAL POLL OF VENEZUELA'S TWO LOWEST SOCIAL CLASSES WHICH MAKE UP MORE THAN HALF OF VENEZUELAN SOCIETY. THE POLL WAS DONE BY CONSORCIO PROMOTING, AND QUESTIONED 1,946 PEOPLE LIVING IN BARRIOS IN CARACAS, VALENCIA, MARACAY, BARQUISIMETO, MARACAIBO, SAN CRISTOBAL, BARCELONA, AND CIUDAD BOLIVAR.

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R 031116Z APR 98  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
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AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
CIA WASHDC

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DIA WASHDC  
USIA WASHDC 1512  
USDOC WASHDC 2742

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8. (U) THE BIGGEST SURPRISE OF THE POLL WAS THAT 79 PERCENT OF THE RESPONDENTS SAID THEY WILL VOTE IN THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS. THIS IS FAR ABOVE WHAT OTHER POLLS HAVE SHOWN, EITHER CALLING INTO QUESTION THE RESULTS OF THE VENAMCHAM POLL OR INDICATING THAT VOTERS ARE MOBILIZING IN THE BARRIOS FASTER THAN HAD BEEN EXPECTED.

9. (U) THE OVERALL RESULTS OF THE POLL ARE:

CANDIDATE	POPULARITY
DON'T KNOW	28.6
HUGO CHAVEZ	25.9
IRENE SAEZ	19.4
CLAUDIO FERMIN	12.4
ENRIQUE SALAS ROMER	5.9
EDUARDO FERNANDEZ	3.2
ANTONIO LEDEZMA	2.3
TEODORO PETKOFF	1.2
OTHER	0.7
LUIS GIUSTI	0.4
TOTAL	100.0

10. (U) BROKEN DOWN BY CITIES, THE POLL RESULTS COMPARING CHAVEZ AND IRENE ARE:

CITY	CHAVEZ	IRENE	DON'T KNOW
CARACAS	29.7	16.3	33.0

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VALENCIA 28.3 9.4 43.4

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MARACAY	30.1	19.6	39.9
BARQUISIMETO	20.5	15.3	35.8
MARACAIBO	16.3	27.0	26.7
SAN CRISTOBAL	12.7	27.0	28.6
BARCELONA	40.7	23.7	0.0
PUERTO ORDAZ	28.1	20.2	0.0
SAN FELIX	36.1	23.0	0.0

11. (U) DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE POLLS, SEVERAL NOTEWORTHY POINTS ARE:

-- THERE IS A GENDER GAP IN THE BARRIOS. SIXTY-FIVE PERCENT OF CHAVEZ SUPPORTERS ARE MALES. SIXTY-NINE PERCENT OF IRENE SUPPORTERS ARE FEMALE.

-- THERE IS AN AGE GAP. IRENE WINS EASILY AMONG THE 18-24 AGE GROUP, TAKING 31 PERCENT OF THE VOTE TO CHAVEZ'S 23 PERCENT. HOWEVER, IRENE'S VOTE PERCENTAGE DECLINES WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE AGE GROUP, UNTIL SHE REACHES A LOW OF 10.8 PERCENT AMONG THE 45-96 AGE GROUP. CHAVEZ, HOWEVER, PICKS UP VOTES WITH EACH SUCCESSIVE AGE GROUP, ENDING WITH 28.4 PERCENT OF THE VOTE OF THE 45-96 AGE GROUP.

-- THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY IS STILL THE DOMINANT PARTY IN THE BARRIOS, WITH 17 PERCENT OF THE RESPONDENTS IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES AS AD MEMBERS OR SUPPORTERS. HOWEVER, BOTH CHAVEZ AND IRENE HAVE BUILT THEIR PARTIES QUICKLY IN THE BARRIOS. CHAVEZ'S MOVEMENT FOR A FIFTH REPUBLIC (MVR) CLAIMS 16 PERCENT ON THOSE POLLED, WHILE THE I.R.E.N.E. PARTY CLAIMS TEN PERCENT. THE TRADITIONAL LEFTIST PARTIES HAVE ALMOST NO FOLLOWING IN THE BARRIOS. THE RADICAL CAUSE PARTY (LCR) HAS 3 PERCENT OF THOSE POLLED, MOVEMENT TOWARDS

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SOCIALISM (MAS) HAS TWO PERCENT, AND HOMELAND FOR ALL (PPT) HAS LESS THAN ONE PERCENT.

SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME  
-----

12. (U) AN LOCAL POLLING COMPANY, STYMIED IN ITS EFFORTS TO CONDUCT POLLS AMONG VENEZUELA'S UPPER CLASS AT THE CARACAS COUNTRY CLUB AND OTHER EXCLUSIVE SITES, DECIDED THAT ASKING THE CHILDREN OF THE WEALTHY WHICH CANDIDATE THEY FAVORED WOULD GARNER AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF THE POLITICAL LEANINGS OF THEIR PARENTS. THE POLLSTERS WENT TO A FEW OF CARACAS' PRESTIGIOUS PRIVATE SCHOOLS TO CONDUCT THEIR POLL. THE RESULTS WERE SURPRISING. AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE STUDENTS INDICATED THAT THEIR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE PREFERENCE IS HUGO CHAVEZ. STUNNED BY THIS RESULT, THE

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POLLSTERS WENT BACK AND ASKED THE CHILDREN WHY CHAVEZ IS THEIR FAVORITE CANDIDATE. THE ANSWER THESE POLLSTERS RECEIVED FROM THE CHILDREN WAS UNANIMOUS: "BECAUSE MY PARENTS SAID THAT IF CHAVEZ IS ELECTED WE WILL MOVE TO MIAMI."

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HIGH FLYERS AND BOTTOM-FEEDERS  
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USDOC WASHDC 2743

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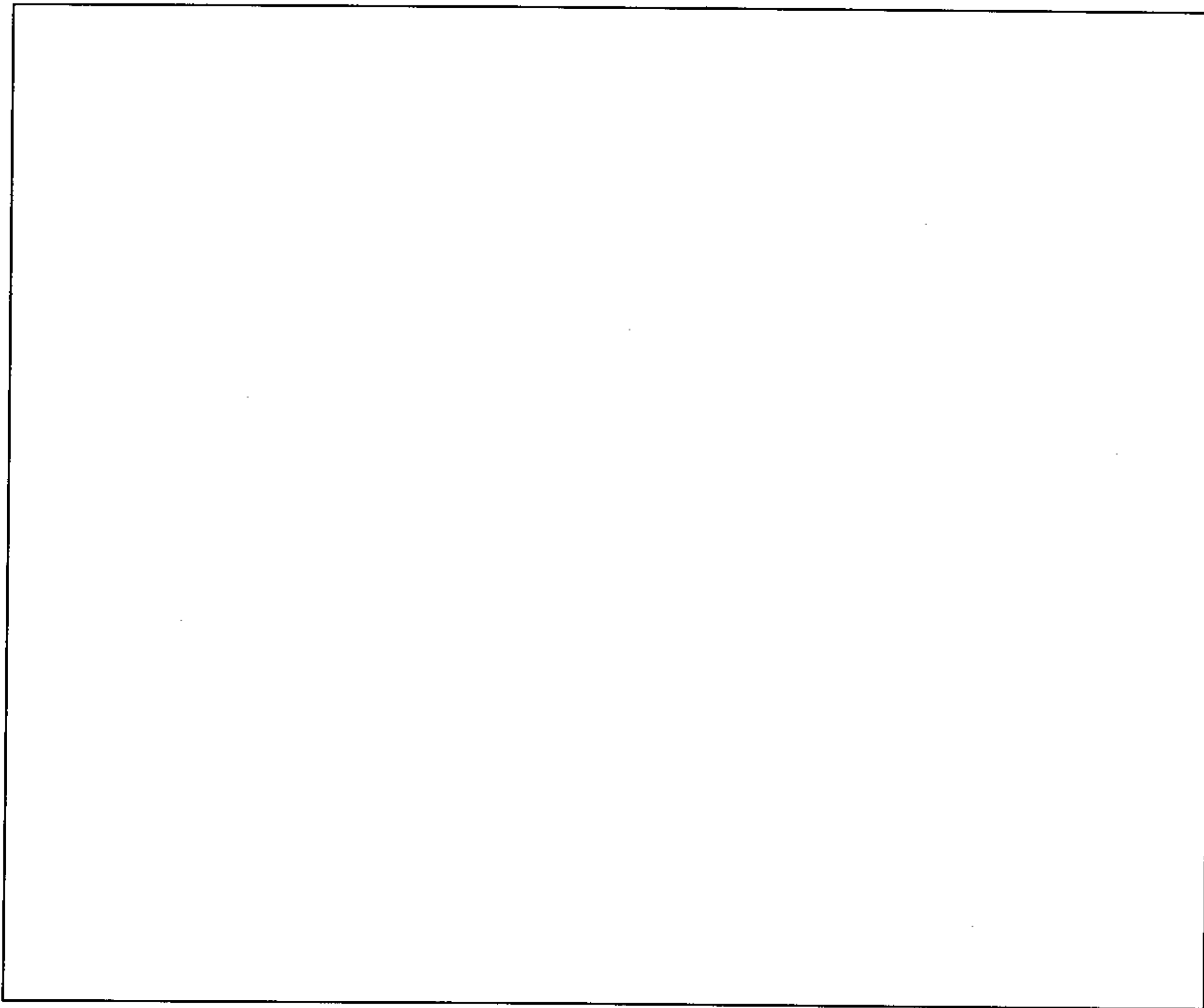
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